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Rush Week

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Left: Brooke Shields with artist Jonathan Horowitz. Right: Whitney Museum director Adam Weinberg. (All photos: Linda Yablonsky)

ONE WAY TO COUNTER spring-auction fever in New York is to dive headlong into the primary market. This route to the high life was wide open last weekend at the inception of New York Gallery Week, actually a massive, four-day immersion in new exhibitions, talks, and social events mounted by fifty cooperating dealers and seven nonprofits. Their combined efforts to enlighten and entertain at times created difficult choices and awkward social conflicts, a luxury problem if ever there was one. They also brought more artists into the open than, well, an open bar, and God knows there were plenty of those.

The official start to the event, organized by dealers Casey Kaplan and David Zwirner, was Thursday night. Fifty-four uptown shops took advantage of the moment to stage Gallery Night on Fifty-seventh Street, extending their viewing hours for anyone who wasn't in Chelsea. And God knows plenty of people were.

Strong color anointed the inauguration of Tracy Williams's generous new Twenty-third Street location, where Barbara Bloom's treatment of gift giving as an exchange of values took shape in "Present." The show was a great argument for making art out of goody boxes—receptacles for "rumor, speculation, and gossip"—and included a shelf full of drinking glasses that hum when sensors in their bases are exposed to strong light. Bloom herself brought out old-guard Conceptualists like John Baldessari, Christopher Williams, Judith Barry, Louise Lawler, and Lawrence Weiner.



Left: Whitney Museum president Neil Bluhm with 2010 American Art Awardee Alexander von Furstenberg and Whitney board cochair Robert Hurst. Right: Artists Kim Sooja and Barbara Bloom.

Not to be outdone by pioneers of yore, the upstart 7Eleven Gallery, founded by the trio of art-family progeny Sabrina Blachman, Caroline Copley, and Genevieve Hudson Price, opened “Make Yourself at Home,” an ebullient congregation of seventy-six (!) artist-made pieces of furniture and other partly functional domestic objects, all installed in a vacant garage on Tenth Avenue made to look like an underground living room. This promised to be the liveliest opening in town: Guests were not just gawking and gabbing but signing checks.

Still, the evening was even younger than the dealers, so I headed south for the Whitney Museum’s nineteenth American Art Award gala, held this year under the High Line at Gansevoort Street. The site is in the West Village, where Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney first landed her collection, and where the museum’s board, or some of it, hopes to build the \$680 million, two-hundred-thousand-square-foot branch that it sorely needs.

Cocktails were held in Diane von Furstenberg’s nearby shop, where 350 familiar faces (including John McEnroe, Larry Gagosian, Bob Colacello, Beth Rudin DeWoody, Dorothy Lichtenstein, Amy and John Phelan, Barry Diller, and John Wesley by way of a pattern on Shala Monroque’s fetching Miu Miu dress), all imbibing before dinner in a tent erected on the site, gathered in the shadow of The Standard hotel. The event, which pulled in \$1.6 million (at \$75,000 a table), conveyed a palpable sense of what it would be like to have this museum and its involvement with living artists among the downtown studios and galleries where many of the eighteen thousand works in its collection first saw the light of day.

Commissioned by newbie curator Scott Rothkopf, Wade Guyton and Kelley Walker have wrapped the surrounding chain-link fence with 450 feet of vinyl depicting large tropical fruits and black-and-white checkered patterns echoed on the unique set of tablecloths inside the tent. “We’re planting the Whitney flag here,” curator Donna De Salvo said of the fence project, for which Tauba Auerbach and Barbara Kruger are also designing murals for exhibition over the summer and in the fall. By then we should know whether the Renzo Piano–designed building is going to rise or not.

Conspicuous in his absence was the Whitney’s biggest donor, cosmetics heir Leonard Lauder, who apparently opposes the idea. (The board will vote on it later this month.) Acknowledging how many years (thirty?) the museum has tried to expand, director Adam Weinberg made his feelings clear. “This is the beginning of the tipping point,” he told the crowd before presenting Alexander von Furstenberg with the Whitney’s award for art

patronage. Guyton\Walker also designed that, cleverly hiding it in plain sight on the platform stage, where their four-by-eight-foot Sheetrock painting leaned against a larger one of a giant sliced orange.

"The Whitney is a dream factory for artists," von Furstenberg said to loud applause, seemingly unaware that Guyton\Walker, who work with mechanically produced images, were going to destroy the award onstage and deliver a pristine version untouched by spilled champagne or vibrations from Lou Reed's affecting after-dinner performance. After Reed let loose with a new take on "Walk on the Wild Side" and an especially beautiful "Perfect Day," everyone wanted the Whitney to move downtown, where it seems to belong.

Friday night brought me to the museum's current Madison Avenue neighborhood, where Roni Horn was having her first show with Hauser & Wirth, and Gagosian was feting Richard Prince's deceptively layered "Tiffany Paintings," after the titular jeweler's daily ads in the New York Times. Horn's large red-and-white abstract cut-paper drawings represented something of a breakthrough that should dissipate the sting of critics who, she said, usually ignore her, "unless they want to be scathing." The works were all sold, I heard, at \$500,000 a pop. "They do get a nice price here," Horn said.

The same was probably true for Prince, who took advantage of his Truman Capote book collection for his latest appropriations, of which there were three floors full without a joke in sight. Nor did I see Prince among his cabal of buffed followers (Peter Brant, Ron Delsener, Kim Heirston, Mario Testino, Peter Marino, Tony Shafrazi), and when the crowd departed for dinner at the Monkey Bar, I went around the corner to the Surrey Hotel. There, jolly Iwan Wirth had taken over the Bar Pleiades for friends of Horn's like poet Anne Carson and artists Ellen Gallagher and Peter McGough, who satisfied themselves with scrumptious finger food while Mick Jagger and L'Wren Scott dined at Café Boulud next door.

Back in Chelsea on Saturday night, West Twenty-fourth Street provided a gale of rolling thunder, with new shows opening inside every gallery door. It was unusually quiet at Marianne Boesky, where Hans Op de Beeck had transformed the space into a gray-walled salon for his large noir-ish watercolors, but Mary Boone's gallery was teeming with ripened stars like Julian Schnabel, Barry Le Va, Karole Armitage, and Eric Fischl on hand for "Some Pictures from the '80s" by David Salle, who seemed almost shy in their company. At Luhring Augustine's twenty-fifth anniversary exhibition, I found only Ragnar Kjartansson and Guido van der Werve among the many artists represented; the dealers had already left for their big bash at the marbled Century Club in midtown. Yet more people (Art Basel's Marc Spiegler, artists Liam Gillick and Sarah Morris, collector Andy Stillpass, LA MoCA curator Bennett Simpson) were at Metro Pictures for T. J. Wilcox's premiere of three new films accompanied by wooden folding screens printed with collaged photographs. The big "get" here was Wilcox's portrayal of Adele Astaire, Fred's overlooked sister and onetime dance partner. "She was a girl from a small town in Nebraska who thought big," Wilcox said. I can relate.

But at this point my head was nearing burnout from juggling so many images, objects, ideas, and (especially) pathologies. Nevertheless, I trooped on to Andrea Rosen's inspired juxtaposition, in her front gallery, of sculptures by Nate Lowman and Scottish artist Karla Black, neither of whom she represents. "I just like their work," said Rosen, who is getting to seem more like a curator all the time. From there, it was on to Cameron Jamie's display of drawings, ceramics, and carved wooden gargoyles at Gladstone Gallery, where I found photographer Terry Richardson and pop-cult heroine Cynthia Plaster Caster arm in arm. "I know it isn't popular in New York," the Paris-based Jamie said, "but I did everything by hand myself." The carvings alone, based on his drawings, took him a year each.

At the gallery of Casey Kaplan (the dealer responsible for inciting the week's art attack), artist Trisha Donnelly was hiding behind the reception desk and fiddling with her iPod, from which loud disco was streaming. "I have to have

music!" she shouted. I moved on to Elizabeth Dee, where Josephine Meckseper had dropped the gallery ceiling ten inches and put up a new one of Plexi tiles covered in chrome, mirrored the walls, and turned the whole space into a twisted boutique featuring a sculpture made with balls of steel wool stuck on a jewelry stand that made me laugh out loud.

But the most refreshing event of the night was at Artists Space in SoHo, which had been emptied out for a benefit dinner for one hundred honoring Julie Ault, the writer, archivist, and cofounder of the collective Group Material. With dancer/choreographer Michael Clark as well as Stephen Prina slated to perform, Wolfgang Tillmans on hand to toast Ault, and Fergus and Margot Henderson from London's St. John restaurant in the kitchen, this was the hot ticket of the week.

It was also one of the most unpretentious and culturally rewarding evenings I have ever spent in the New York art world, largely due to Artists Space director Stefan Kalmár's historicizing—and enlivening—influence on the near-forgotten nonprofit. "Our space is not large compared to the ambitions we have," Kalmár joked, but the program bore him out and so did the guests, who included artists Joan Jonas, Martin Creed, Charles Atlas, and Rachel Harrison; historian Irving Sandler and his wife, Lucy; dealers Simon Preston, Maureen Paley, Carol Greene, Brooke Alexander, Gavin Brown, Pauline Daly, and Andrea Rosen; curator Clarissa Dalrymple; consultant Thea Westreich; and MoMA deputy director Kathy Halbreich.

Clark, who had a diaper pin in one ear and appeared in a black leather kilt and white shirt, performed a slow-motion dance to Kraftwerk's "Hall of Mirrors" with five members of his company. Accompanying himself on guitar, Prina made jaws drop with his cover of a Joni Mitchell song from Blue, and Tillmans moved everyone with his articulate praise of Ault, calling attention to her taste for In-N-Out burgers, her refusal to get a cell phone, and her impressive list of exhibitions and publications, all done with more dedication than remuneration. "Julie," he said, "you are an amplifier. You amplify the issues we need to address." For her part, the sweet-natured Ault called Artists Space "an alternative in the best sense—an alternative to the prevailing corporatization of art." She had that right.

Sunday was the Lower East Side's turn to shine but I opted for the South Village, where Creed and Jonathan Horowitz were inaugurating Brown's expansion of his gallery into the former slaughterhouse next door. Creed laid the floor (which Urs Fischer excavated three years ago) with 120 different kinds of marble tiles, while Horowitz advanced a protest against meat eating with "Go Vegan!," a stomach-churning reinstallation of videos and photos of celebrity vegetarians from his 2002 show at Greene Naftali. They didn't get the message over at Harris Lieberman, which was serving hot dogs at its opening for Matt Saunders. But if the weekend taught me anything, it was that food of any kind won't satisfy a hungry spirit, nor can a full wallet produce the best art. Both require a dose of truth and beauty, and a little heart to boot.